

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-10 (cancelled).

Claim 11 (currently amended). A zither as in claim 40 14, wherein the ~~front~~ panel may be replaced without removing the strings.

Claim 12 (currently amended). A zither as in claim 40 14 and further including interchangeable chord bar retaining assemblies; and

readily releasable securement means allowing rapid interchange of the chord bar retaining assemblies whereby the player is capable of playing multiple chord groupings (keys) on a single instrument.

Claim 13 (currently amended). A zither as in claim 40 14, wherein the bottom panel is configured to increase the volume of the sound chamber defined by the frame and the top and bottom panel members.

Claim 14 (new). A zither, comprising:

a lightweight hollow frame supporting easily removable front and back panel members, said frame formed of a non-organic material and defining, in conjunction with the front and back panel members, a hollow body member, said frame of sufficient strength and stability to not only be independent structurally from said front and back panel members but also to support double strings, allowing a chromatically tuned instrument to sound similar to one that is diatonically tuned by increasing the number of strings that play with a given chord, said readily removable front and back panel members facilitating changes in the instrument's appearance and sound quality.